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Date 1/18/13

For Immediate Release:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE CONTINUES FALL TO 5.7%

(HELENA) --- Montana's unemployment rate continued to drop in December, falling 0.1 percentage points to 5.7%. Montana's unemployment rate has been on a downward trend since mid-2011. The national rate held steady at 7.8%.

"Montana starts 2013 with a strong economy that has been adding jobs and gaining wages for over two years," said Labor Commissioner Pam Bucy. "Although the national economy faces risks and uncertainty arising from federal tax and spending levels, I am confident that Montana's economy will have the momentum and resilience to continue growth in the next year. Montana will continue to outperform the nation, with lower unemployment than the national average."

Montana's total employment, which includes payroll workers, the self-employed, and agricultural workers, increased by 201 jobs over the month on a seasonally adjusted basis. Total employment has increased by over 7,000 jobs since December 2011. Payroll employment estimates indicated a similar employment gain of 500 jobs, with an 11,200 job gain over the last year. Preliminary annual data from 2012 suggest that the professional and business services industry and the construction industry added the most jobs over the year, while the government sector experienced continued job losses for a second straight year.

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) remained unchanged for December, following a decline in November, because of continued falling prices for gasoline. Food and shelter prices increased for the month. Food prices are expected to increase over the next year due to lower food production in 2012 because of wide-spread drought. Shelter prices have started to rise because of the stabilization and tepid growth of the national housing market. Core inflation, measured by the all items less food and energy index, rose 0.1 percentage points.

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*** Unemployment figures are seasonally-adjusted. Seasonally-adjusted numbers remove the effects of events that follow a more or less regular month-to-month pattern each year. These adjustments make nonseasonal patterns easier to identify. The margin of error for the unemployment rate is plus or minus 0.8 percentage points at the 90 percent confidence level. All questions relating to the*

calculation of unemployment rates should be directed to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau at 1-800-541-3904.

MEDIA NOTE: The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry will be revising the 2012 preliminary employment estimates and unemployment rates in our annual benchmarking process. This process is completed in February of each year, with the updated figures published in March. Due to this process, the January 2013 Labor Situation Report will not be released until *Monday, March 18, 2013*. In other words, there will not be a Labor Situation Report released in February.

******* INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET *******



Visit our website at www.ourfactsyourfuture.org for additional information and analysis, including answers to questions about the unemployment rate, industry employment levels, and annual employment data for Montana's Indian Reservations. **This month's Economy at a Glance article provides information on an innovative multi-state IT project and how that will impact your access to labor market information.** County labor force information can be found by using this link:

<http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/cgi/databrowsing/?PAGEID=4&SUBID=205>